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SOCRATES ON LIFE, DEATH, AND SUICIDE

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A fairly brief section of the *Phaedo* (61B-69E) is one of the most explicit statements of Plato's conception of the importance, significance, and purpose of human existence, but this explicitness is counterbalanced by an elusiveness that has given rise to persistent problems of interpretation, both scholarly and philosophical. Socrates' initial statement of the relative value of life and death (62A) is, for example, immediately ambiguous, although it seems at least clear that suicide is ruled out. And when he proceeds to explain the basis for this prohibition he does so in terms of religious imagery whose significance is by no means clear. We are told that our life is in the service of gods, but how we are to understand these gods, what the purpose of our service is, and how we are to perform it, are questions that are never explicitly answered. The aim of this study is to explore the meaning of Socrates' remarks, suggesting answers to the above questions and giving due consideration to the problems of interpretation as they arise. Although the section passes through several different themes, these are in fact stages in a continuous argument, as we shall see.

The discussion begins when Socrates asks Cebes to say goodbye to Euenus for him, "and tell him, if he is smart, to follow me as quickly as possible" (61B8). In reply to Simmias' bewilderment at this remark, Socrates merely asks, "Isn't Euenus a philosopher?" (C6), concluding "Then both he and everyone who pursues this business worthily will be willing to do so. But perhaps he will not do violence to himself, for they say that is not right" (C8–10).

Cebes is eager to hear more about this prohibition against suicide, about which he had already heard something from Philolaus and others but "nothing clear", and Socrates agrees to "examine and mythologize (διασκοπεῖν τὲ καὶ μυθολογεῖν) about our habitation over there" (E1-2). In answer to Cebes' reiteration that he has heard nothing clear about the impiety of suicide, Socrates, instead of "something clear" offers one of the most obscure statements in the Platonic corpus, a *locus vexatus*, in Archer-Hind's words:

'Αλλὰ προθυμεῖσθαι χρή, ἔφη· τάχα γὰρ ἂν καὶ ἀκού- 62a
σαις. ἴσως μέντοι θαυμαστόν σοι φανεῖται εἰ τοῦτο μόνον
τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων ἁπλοῦν ἐστιν, καὶ οὐδέποτε τυγχάνει τῷ
ἀνθρώπῳ, ὥσπερ καὶ τἆλλα, ἔστιν ὅτε καὶ οἷς βέλτιον
τεθνάναι ἢ ζῆν, οἷς δὲ βέλτιον τεθνάναι, θαυμαστὸν ἴσως
σοι φαίνεται εἰ τούτοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις μὴ ὅσιον αὐτοὺς
ἑαυτοὺς εὖ ποιεῖν, ἀλλὰ ἄλλον δεῖ περιμένειν εὐεργέτην.

"But it is necessary to be zealous," he said: "for perhaps you might even hear something. Perhaps it will appear wondrous to you if this alone of all other things is absolute, and it never happens to people, as in other cases, that it is sometimes and for some people better to be dead than to live; and those for whom it is better to be dead, perhaps it appears wondrous to you if it is not pious for these people to benefit themselves, but they must wait for someone else to benefit them."

There are four basic disputes in this passage, to which most (though not all) divergent interpretations can be traced:

1. Lines 2-3 (in the Greek) have been taken sometimes as "It will surprise you (but is true) to hear that this alone is absolute" and sometimes as "It would be surprising (i.e. is false) if this alone were absolute".
2. The word "this" in the preceding clause has been taken sometimes to refer to the prior statement that suicide is not right, and sometimes to the subsequent statement that "it never happens... that it is sometimes... better to be dead than to live" (and occasionally to some other assertion).
3. The statement that "it never happens... that it is sometimes... better to be dead than to live" has sometimes been taken to mean that it is *never* better and sometimes that it is *always* better to be dead than to live.
4. Line 5, like line 2, has sometimes been taken to mean "It is surprising (but is (true) that they cannot benefit themselves" and sometimes "It would be surprising if (i.e. is false that) they cannot benefit themselves".

Most of the permutations resulting from these four disputes are untenable because of either internal or contextual inconsistency, and have not been advocated,[1] while others duplicate one another in different forms, so that ultimately there seem only three basic interpretations, each with several variations resulting from various attempts to defend them. One of these interpretations is the traditional one, dating back at least to Olympiodorus,[2] which can be stated, in terms of the above alternatives, as follows:

> It will surprise you (but is true) to hear that this alone is absolute, namely that it is always better to be dead than to live; and it is surprising (but true) that people cannot confer this benefit upon themselves.

A second, comparatively recent interpretation may be stated as:

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1. An exception is the interpretation of R. D. Archer-Hind (*The Phaedo of Plato*, London: MacMillan, 1883, p. 56), which sees Socrates as here sanctioning suicide. But this is hardly possible in context, since the passage is Socrates' explanation of why suicide is not permissible, and Archer-Hind's interpretation has not been defended by others.
2. Cf. W. D. Geddes (ed.), *The Phaedo of Plato*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan 1885), p. 214 n.

> It would be surprising if (i.e. is false that) this alone were absolute, namely that it is never better to be dead than to live; and it is surprising (but true) that those for whom death is better may not confer this benefit upon themselves.

The traditional interpretation thus says that it is true that death is always better, while the modern says it is false that death is never better, the dispute being whether death is universally good or only occasionally so.

The third general interpretation involves taking "this", in line 1, to refer to suicide or the impropriety of suicide, giving the passage the following sense:

> It will surprise you (but is true) to hear that this alone is absolute, namely that suicide is not right; and it is surprising (but true) that even those for whom it is better to be dead cannot benefit themselves.

This interpretation, though neither as venerable as the first nor defended in recent literature, was evidently popular in the last century, as Burnet refers to it as "the interpretation of most recent editors" (62A2). He rejects it, however, on the ground that "no one has suggested that the lawlessness of suicide is the only rule which is absolute, and the suggestion would be absurd." Although he does not explain the nature of this absurdity, one can at least say that nothing in Plato would support the claim that suicide is absolutely immoral while murder in general is not. Moreover Plato's ethical position certainly gives the impression that crimes against others are worse than those against oneself. Whether or not because of Burnet's observation that it attributes to Plato an "absurdity", this interpretation does not seem to have been advocated in the subsequent literature, and does not seem cogent to me.

Whichever of the remaining interpretations commends itself, we should not expect it to be unproblematic since Socrates' prefatory remark, advising that if Cebes is *zealous* he *may* hear something, suggests that his statement will not be clear and straightforward but elusive, for reasons that remain to be seen.

The major objections to the traditional interpretation appear to have first been raised by Geddes (note D):

1. "If the statement intended to be conveyed by Plato is one thus entirely paradoxical, it is introduced very abruptly, in a manner neither natural nor Platonic."
2. "The succeeding clause, *οἷς δὲ βέλτιον τεθνάναι* [for some people better to be dead], followed especially by *τούτοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις* [for these people], naturally implies that Socrates is predicating the desirableness of death only in the case of a *class* of men (namely, that of the *φιλόσοφοι*), not in the case of mankind as a whole."
3. The zest for life evident in the dialogues shows that Plato did not regard death as universally desirable over life, and, since "Plato believed in a state of punishments as well as rewards, ... while Death would bring blessing to the good, it would bring misery to the wicked."
4. "'It never happens that it is better in some circumstances, and in the case of some persons, to die than to live' ... is equivalent to saying that Life is to be chosen rather than Death."

In answer to the first objection Bluck has pointed out [3] that there is nothing abrupt here since the desirability of death had already been mentioned at 61C. It has been objected to this [4] that both there and subsequently (63E–64C) Socrates speaks only of the desirability of death *for the philosopher*, a restriction at variance with the traditional interpretation of this passage as asserting an absolute and universal desirability of death. But to say that Socrates speaks of the desirability of death only for the philosopher is not quite accurate. He says not that philosophers in particular will *benefit* from death, but that they in particular will be *willing* to die, which means only that they perceive the desirability of death while non-philosophers may fail to perceive it even if it applies to them as well.

As for the second objection, I agree with Bluck's observation (p. 152) that there is no special problem in taking *τούτοις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις* to refer to mankind generally.

The fourth objection, however, is certainly correct in maintaining that (out of context) "it never happens that ... sometimes" is more naturally taken to mean "never" than "always", and translators taking the traditional view have tacitly acknowledged this by such devices as inserting "only" before "sometimes", as did Heindorf and Stallbaum in their editions. But in context the traditional reading is both possible and plausible, though more awkward than its rival, and, as Bluck notes, "It would be at least redundant on any other interpretation — 'it never happens ... that ... sometimes' " (p. 153).

The third objection I think is the heart of the matter. I doubt that the other three objections would have produced serious opposition to the traditional interpretation were it not for the conviction that Plato simply would not hold death universally superior to life. The textual considerations are only the ammunition, not the cause of the dispute, for on a purely textual level the more recent interpretation poses far more problems than it solves. It involves, for example, the supposition that the first occurrence of "perhaps it will appear surprising to you if" (62A2) "introduces a hypothesis which Socrates regards, and expects Cebes to regard, as false," [5] while the second one (62A6, identical except for tense) "introduces what he regards as true, though doubtless paradoxical." It seems rather implausible that Plato should use the same phrase twice in one sentence, expecting us to take it as indicating falsity the first time and truth the second. The recent interpretation similarly involves translating *εἰ* in the first case as "if" and in the second as "that", as Hackforth does, although he acknowledges that we cannot suppose "that a Greek writer would be conscious of two possible meanings of *θαυμαστὸν εἰ*." The reason he nevertheless introduces such a distinction into his translation is his feeling that there is a "failure of Socrates to make grammatical structure completely conform to logic," but one can put this conversely and suggest that if the recent interpretation is not logically compatible with the grammar of the sentence perhaps it is the interpretation and not the grammar that is at fault. Again, since this interpretation sees only one of the "surprising" facts as true, and the other as false, "what Socrates expects Cebes to be surprised at is not two

3. R. S. BLUCK, *Plato's Phaedo* (New York : Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), p. 152.

4. Leonardo TARÁN, "Plato, *Phaedo*, 62 A" (*American Journal of Philology* 87 (1966) 326–336), p. 329.

5. This, and the following quotations, are from R. HACKFORTH, *Plato's Phaedo* (New York : Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), p. 191, whose interpretation is similar to Burnet's (*Plato's Phaedo*, Oxford, 1911).

things, but one thing: namely that, despite the extreme improbability of death *never* being preferable to life, suicide should always be sinful." Yet the grammar indicates that there are two things to be wondered at, both by the change in tense and by the conjunction "and" (δὲ, 62A5). Hackforth's attempt to account for the shift of tense is rather tentative and weak but the traditional interpretation can explain it quite naturally: the universal superiority of death to life *will* surprise Cebes because he had not yet heard of it, while the impropriety of suicide *is* surprising to him because he has already heard about and been surprised by it (61E). And to circumvent the implication of *two* surprising things suggested by the conjunction δὲ, Hackforth admittedly mistranslates it by "so" ("which it does not mean") instead of "and".

There have been other attempts to extract the meaning of the recent interpretation from the text while avoiding the attendant grammatical problems, either by construing the grammar differently or altering the text,[6] but these readings seem to me less natural than the traditional one. We saw earlier that Socrates' prefatory remark suggests that this passage requires some attentiveness if one is to hear what it says. Its obscurity seems deliberate since all the interpretations can be stated perfectly clearly; and if Socrates' remark shows that Plato was aware of the obscurity, presumably Plato *chose* not to put it more clearly. One reason for this might be a concern that too open an assertion of the superiority of death, whether for some or all, might be dangerous for those who would not grasp or appreciate the arguments against suicide. This would be a consideration on either interpretation, though obviously much greater on the traditional one. But whatever the motive, a deliberate obscurity could well explain the awkwardness of the one phrase for the traditional view but not, I think, the extent of the grammatical contortions necessary for the recent one.

As the above considerations show, the adoption of the recent interpretation over the traditional cannot have been due primarily to grammatical considerations. Let us return to the question raised by the third objection, whether the superiority of death accords with Platonic philosophy, for the grammatical arguments are really in the service of this question. Geddes' first point, that the zest for life displayed by Socrates in the dialogues is inconsistent with the desirability of death, is unconvincing. The belief that death is preferable to life, but suicide improper, does not require one to spend one's life gloomily in the throes of Weltschmerz. One might as well make the best of it and cheerfully enjoy it to whatever extent possible, as it would no doubt be Socrates' nature to do. Even in prison Socrates remains cheerful and lighthearted, from which one would scarcely infer that he preferred prison to freedom. Geddes buttresses his argument by reminding us "that Plato believed in a state of punishments as well as rewards..., and that, while Death would bring blessing to the good, it would bring misery to the wicked." Socrates does indeed say that death is better for the good than the evil (63C) and better for the "initiated" than the "unitiated" (69C), but he

6. Cf. TARÁN; Hans REYNEN, "Phaidoninterpretationen", *Hermes* 96 (1968) 41–60; Gerhard MÜLLER, "Platons Phaidon", *Gnomon* 31 (1959) 340–346.
Additional discussion of this passage may be found in W. J. VERDENIUS, "Notes on Plato's *Phaedo*", *Mnemosyne* IV ser. 11 (1958) 193–243 (esp. 197–9); H. Macl. CURRIE, "Plato, Phaedo 62a", *Hermes* 86 (1958) 124-5; J. TATE, "The *Phaedo*", *Classical Review* N.S. 6 (1956) 221–223.

never says that death is so far inferior for the non-philosopher that it would be better for him not to die. The punishments awaiting the evil will make their state an unpleasant one but pleasure is not the highest value for Plato. Unlike the concept of eternal damnation, Plato's concept of posthumous punishment whether literal or metaphorical, is one of purification, if not by the mechanism described later in the myth, at least through the cycles of reincarnation which are purgations as well as punishment. An evil person who dies may suffer, but the suffering is a purgation and incentive to emend himself, which would be lacking in his continued life. As Bluck observes, "the soul, however much it may be tainted, stands a better chance of attaining some knowledge of truth, or at any rate of receiving desirable and needful conversion, when separated from the body" (p. 153).

I know of nowhere in the dialogues where it is suggested that life is superior to death for the individual, the closest equivalent being the present prohibition against suicide, which, however, is explicitly directed at "those for whom death is better". On the other hand there are suggestions throughout the dialogues of the superiority of death to life from a personal point of view (a superiority which disappears from an impersonal, hence unselfish point of view, resulting in the prohibition of suicide). In the *Apology*, for example, Socrates argues that it is a mistake to consider death an evil, and we ought rather consider it a great blessing (40B-C), and in the *Laws*, written at the end of Plato's career as the *Apology* was at the beginning, the Athenian denies that life is superior to death (VIII 828D). Similarly, the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus* all suggest that the highest good for man is the ascent to wisdom, the unobstructed beholding of truth, but that this cannot be accomplished during life due to unavoidable restraints by our soul's corporeal prison; conversely all evil and misery is ascribed to the baseness of corporeal desires, which we are finally rid of in death.

This point of view is highlighted by the interlude which follows Socrates' claim that death is not to be feared, and precedes his attempt to defend that claim. Crito interrupts to report that the executioner has asked him to warn Socrates to speak as little as possible, lest his excitement interfere with the poison, for when that happens a second or third dose is sometimes necessary. Socrates replies that in that case he should be prepared to administer two or three doses if necessary. Paul Friedländer's comments are worth repeating:

> The man who administers the poison appears twice in the dialogue. At the beginning (63D), he warns Socrates to speak as little as possible lest the poison have to be administered "twice and three times." Socrates for once does not obey, since to give up this conversation would be to deny this very being. If necessary, the man should prepare a cup "even twice and three times." In the *Gorgias* (498E), in the *Philebus* (60A), and in the *Laws* (956E), Plato uses the proverb: "Even twice and three times the good (or the right)!" It is hardly imaginable that he would not have had in mind this "proverb", as he calls it in the *Philebus*, since he has Socrates repeat the same words for emphasis. This is connected with the brief scene toward the end when Socrates asks the same man administering the poison whether it is permissible to offer a libation to the gods. To offer poison to the gods? That would be a sacrilege but for the fact that the poison here is something good, a healing power.[7]

7. Paul FRIEDLÄNDER, *Plato* vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1969), p. 61.

It therefore seems to me that, in terms of compatibility with the *Phaedo* and the Platonic position generally, as well as in terms of grammatical plausibility, the traditional interpretation has more to recommend it than the others.

Regardless of how one interprets the passage, Cebes' desire to hear "something clear" is clearly not yet satisfied. Socrates' initial warning of obscurity, and concession that what he is saying sounds surprising are complemented by Cebes' reaction: "laughing quietly he said 'Zeus be witness!', speaking in his own dialect." He is so taken aback by the paradox that suicide is wrong even when death is preferable, that he drops his Attic and momentarily reverts to his mother tongue. That he is not overreacting is clear from Socrates' reply: "Thus stated it would indeed appear unreasonable (*ἄλογον*)." Since the remainder of the section consists of Socrates' attempts to clarify and justify his paradox, our own attempt to understand and evaluate it is best tied to the subsequent development of the discussion.

His first attempt to replace the unreason (*ἄλογον*) with an account (λόγος) is presented equally obscurely, by recourse to certain esoteric mystery doctrines, evidently of Orphic origin,[8] which depict us as in sort of a prison[9] from which it would be impious to escape since we are possessions of the gods (62B). This is an "imposing saying and not easy to see through", he says. Together with his description of it as esoteric (*ἐν ἀπορρήτοις*), this suggests that it is not to be taken literally but calls for a metaphorical interpretation, as is true of Plato's religious passages generally. Since life consists of the presence of the soul in the body (105C, cf. 64C), the claim that life is a kind of prison into which we have been put by the gods suggests the body is a kind of prison in which the soul has been confined by the gods — an interpretation which accords with subsequent passages in the *Phaedo*.[10] The application of this view of life to mankind generally (*οἱ ἄνθρωποι* — 62B4) provides some confirmation of the suggestion that death is better for *all* men, for life conceived as an imprisonment would certainly be inferior to death conceived as a liberation.

The reason which Socrates proceeds to give for not attempting escape from this prison (i.e. for not committing suicide) seems at first a rather base appeal to fear:

> Wouldn't you, if one of your possessions killed himself without your signifying that you wished him to die, be angry with him and, if you had some way of punishing him, wouldn't you punish him? (62C1–4)

Cebes, however, sees in this doctrine a better reason for refraining from suicide, a reason so compelling that the problem ceases to be why we should refrain from suicide but, on the contrary, why we should want to die at all. Gods are presumed to be supremely good,[11] which means that we are now being cared for by the best of all masters, far better cared for than we could for ourselves. A philosopher is most likely to realize this and should therefore be least of all men willing to die, whereas Socrates

8. ARCHER-HIND, p. 57.
9. Cf. BLUCK, p. 44 n. 3.
10. 81E, 82E, cf. HACKFORTH, p. 36 n. 2.
11. This shows Cebes' commitment to mystery religions such as Orphism and Pythagorianism: goodness is not one of the attributes traditionally associated with the Homeric gods.

maintains the reverse. But — perhaps because he preferred to leave the matter in popular religious terms — apart from praising Cebes' tenacity in tracking down arguments, Socrates appears ready to let the matter drop, until Simmias undertakes to prompt him: "But indeed, Socrates, this time there seems even to me to be something in what Cebes says", and he restates Cebes' objection.

Socrates' reply replaces his previous appeal to the traditional religious motives of reward and punishment with an argument which, though more interesting, does not yet resolve the tension between the claims that death is preferable but suicide wrong. He says that he expects that after death he will be with other gods no less good and wise than these; which may explain why he does not mind dying, but only skirts Cebes' and Simmias' objection without disposing of the underlying difficulty that gave rise to it. This problem is best stated here in terms of a pair of closely related questions: If in death we exchange our present masters for other similar ones, why is life any more an imprisonment than death? If life is the condition of being cared for by good and wise gods, why depict this as an imprisonment and thereby as an unpleasant and abnormal constraint? — on the contrary, if life is an imprisonment executed by good and wise gods, doesn't it follow that it is intrinsically good, and that philosophers, of all people, should be least, not most willing to die, even if other gods await them after death? Neither of these questions is directly answered by Socrates' reply, so, following Cebes' example, let us try to track down its position more precisely.

At the beginning and end of Socrates' reply is a reference to his trial, to which he compares his present defence of the claim that death is a benefit:

> I think you are saying that it is necessary for me to defend myself (ἀπολογήσασθαι) on these matters as if in a court of law... I shall try to defend myself (ἀπολογήσασθαι) more convincingly before you than before the judges. (63B1–5)

> If then I am somewhat more convincing to you in my defense (ἀπολογία) than to the Athenian judges, it would be well. (69E3–5)

It is immediately after the first of these statements that he says:

> If I did not think, Simmias and Cebes, first that I would be with other gods both wise and good, and further with departed men better than those here, I would be wrong not to be annoyed by death. But you may be sure that I hope to arrive among good men, although I would not completely depend upon this; but that I shall be with divine masters who are completely good, you may be sure that if I would depend upon anything in these matters I would upon this. (63B5–C4)

In addition to the other questions just raised about this passage we may ask as well who are these "other gods". It is natural to assume they are the traditional gods of the underworld,[12] Hades and Persephone perhaps, but the abode Socrates refers to seems not to be the traditional place of the dead at all. He says, for example, that he is less certain of being with good men than with these gods, and since he evidently believed that many departed men were good,[13] the doubt seems to be whether he will

12. Who are designated by this term in the *Laws* (828C).

13. E.g. *Meno* 93A.

be together with the other departed men at all.[14] But the traditional picture of Hades, on the contrary, was much more definite about human beings associating with one another than with gods. Besides this, the characterization of death as liberation indicates that the traditional Hades is not meant, for it was never conceived in such terms. The suggestion that our passing over to the "other gods" constitutes a liberation carries with it the implication that these gods are not of the same order as the Olympians at all, since passing from one such group of "wise and good" gods to another hardly seems liberating. But if the "other gods" were conceived in terms of a higher order to which even our present "masters" are subject, and to which we are therefore already indirectly subject, our release to them from the present gods would mean only that we were being brought more directly under their sway rather than exchanging one set of masters for another, and would be a significant liberation, even if not total. The possibility that Socrates is referring to a higher order of divinity here is one that we shall be returning to shortly.

Socrates' circumscription of the present discussion by comparisons of it with his trial may call to mind that one of the charges against him was the introduction of "other new deities (*δαίμονες*)". Is there perhaps some connection between the "other deities" he is accused of introducing and the "other gods" (*θεοὺς*) mentioned in his present apologia? Although in the *Symposium* Plato distinguishes between gods (*θεοί*) and daimons (*δαίμονες*), no such distinction seems intended in the *Apology*, where *δαίμονες* is used in accordance with its primary meaning of "god", and where its use was in any case probably dictated by the language of the actual indictment (it appears in Xenophon's account as well).

To consider identifying the "other gods" of the *Phaedo* with the "other deities" of the *Apology* gives rise however to the question of the identity of the deities Socrates was accused of introducing. There seems to be no clear evidence about this. Aristophanes shows him introducing new deities that are "clouds", which suggests that Socrates may have sought to substitute for traditional theological explanations some other explanatory principles or abstraction that may have been accorded (or thought to be accorded) ontological status; although in view of Aristophanes' characterization of Socrates as a sophist, the clouds may be meant only to represent the beclouding principles of sophistry. It would be tempting to take the clouds to be parodies of the ontological "forms", were it not that Aristotle's remarks and Xenophon's silence have convinced scholars that the theory of forms originated with Plato, not Socrates. However, we can see from his treatment of Plato that Aristotle did not always accord full credit to the subjects of his historical surveys, and R. E. Allen[15] has recently shown that the customary dividing line between Socratic and Platonic philosophy, according to which Socrates is on one side and the theory of forms on the other, is by no means sharp enough to support this exclusion. Another possibility is that the *δαίμονες* of the *Apology* refer to such beings as Socrates' famous

14. Hackforth's suggestion (p. 42) that Socrates is doubting only whether the departed men are better than those here, ignores the fact that Socrates speaks categorically of "good men" (*ἄνδρας... ἀγαθοὺς*) at 63C1, not only of "better men than here" (*ἀνθρώπους... ἀμείνους τῶν ἐνθάδε*) as at 63B8.

15. *Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms*, New York: Humanities Press, 1970.

δαιμόνιον ("divine sign") to which he there makes reference.[16] On either of these interpretations the "other deities" refer not to any denizens of ancient Greek orthodoxy (in fact the same accusation specifically charged him with not recognizing the popular gods) but to beings furnishing man with an avenue to truth, whether in the ontological sense of the forms or the moral sense of the δαιμόνιον. Socrates' "divine sign" suggests that the sign of the "right way" is to be found by seeking within oneself rather than by following formal precepts of an organized religion, as the forms make possible inquiry and thought in opposition to the mere acceptance of dogma. On either interpretation, or indeed almost any understanding of what the Athenians might have taken to be other new deities introduced by Socrates, the "other deities" of the *Apology* would seem to be gods of philosophy rather than of religion, gods representing the source of truth.

In the *Phaedo*, Socrates subsequently refers to the other gods in the singular (perhaps a more philosophical conception):

> What then of the soul, that invisible thing (ἀιδές) which goes to another such place that is noble and pure and invisible (ἀιδῆ), to Hades (Ἅιδου) most true, next to the good and intelligent god...? (80D5–7)

Here too the traditional religious conception is supplanted by a philosophical interpretation, with Hades now representing, as the context shows, the invisible intelligible realm of pure thought, not the visible but inaccessible land that Homer wrote of. In the *Cratylus* as well Hades was connected with the intelligible realm (403A f): the etymology of "Hades" (Ἅιδης) is fancifully derived from "knowledge of beautiful things" (τὰ καλὰ εἰδέναι), with the explanation that the disembodied souls' desire for virtue is fulfilled by the wisdom of Pluto, from which they were previously cut off by the "fluttering and mania" of the body. Hades is then the realm to which purified (404A1) souls aspire in their desire for knowledge. These passages tend to bear out Friedländer's claim that for Plato "the invisible, Hades, and the intelligible are interchangeable terms."[17]

If we accordingly take the "other gods" of Hades, that Socrates refers to, as symbolic of some philosophically conceived source of truth rather than the traditional religious conception of the gods of the underworld (whether or not we take the opening and closing references to the *Apology* as signifying any connection with the "other deities" mentioned there), then the first of the problems mentioned earlier disappears. We noted that Socrates' claim, that our passing from one set of divine masters to another is a release from imprisonment, can be justified if the "other gods" represent a higher order than the Olympians, so that we are already indirectly subject to them[18] and our passage from life releases us from our present masters without

16. Cf. George ANASTAPLO, "Human Being and Citizen"; in Joseph Cropsey (ed.), *Ancients and Moderns*, New York: Basic Books, 1964, 16–49.

17. Paul FRIEDLÄNDER, *Plato*, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1958), p. 183.

18. Perhaps some confirmation of this is Socrates' suggestion (84E f) that when he dies he will come into the presence of that god whose servant he *currently* is. The fact that he identifies this god as Apollo brings it into conflict with the suggestion that he will be among *other* gods, however, unless Apollo is meant somehow metaphorically, such as in his characteristic as the god of illumination — which might explain also why he is strangely depicted as dwelling in Hades.

subjugating us to new ones. If the "other gods" of the *Phaedo* refer to some primal source on whose basis alone even the Olympians first become possible, then the vision of death as release from prison (rather than transference from one prison to another) becomes intelligible. As life is the imprisonment of the soul within the body and our consequent subjugation to the gods of the material world, death is the soul's release from its prison to some realm to which even the present gods are subject, a realm which might be described in terms of the forms (as at 80D and context), the good, or other "gods" such as the demiurge of the *Timaeus*. Thus in the *Phaedrus* myth gods and human souls alike pay homage to the forms by their earnest contemplation of them.

What then of the other question raised — that our governance by wise and good gods argues the goodness of life, whereas Socrates depicts life as an unpleasant constraint? If this is not to be an outright inconsistency we must inquire after some distinction between the way in which life is good and the way it is an unpleasant constraint. In view of the various reasons we have seen for regarding life as undesirable, in what sense can it also be said to be good?

Socrates had warned Cebes that he would find surprising the claim that death is superior to life, and I have suggested that the surprising nature of this claim is largely what has prompted modern scholars to seek some other meaning for this passage. What then are the attractions of life which render so surprising the proposed superiority of death? One among the several reasons that people struggle to hold on to life, is fear, fear perhaps of the unknown, of the possible painfulness of dying, or of possible terrors after death. Another is the enjoyment of the pleasures life offers us, which we are reluctant to give up. A third is the sense of accomplishment and importance that life can confer. Many people die lamenting that "there is so much left to do", grieved at departing before accomplishing all that they might. Fourth, some value their lives out of a commitment to helping others, and the belief that their death will make life more difficult for others. Leaving aside this last reason for the moment, let us consider what Socrates' response would be to the first three.

In defence of his claim that the philosopher should be willing to die, Socrates argues that the quest for truth cannot succeed as long as the soul is conjoined with the body (63E–68B), and concludes:

> If you saw a man complaining who was about to die, wouldn't this be a sufficient indication to you that he was not, then, a philosopher, but some lover of the body (φιλοσώματος)? And no doubt he will turn out also to be a lover of money and a lover of honor, either one or both of these. (68B8–C3)

The first three attachments to life that we noted are thus functions of a love of the body, which is by no means surprising since life is defined in terms of the soul's conjunction with the body. The first two, involving pleasures and pains, correspond specifically to the present category of "lover of money", all of them being applications of what, in the *Republic*, is called the appetitive element. The third, involving ambition, corresponds here to the love of honor, the "spirited" element of the *Republic*. To say that our attachments to life are based on a love of the body will not, however, discredit them unless the body can be shown to be unworthy of this love.

There are occasional hints in the *Phaedo* of such unworthiness, such as the claim that love of the body is the basis of war and discord (66C) and, in general, of all the evils we suffer (81A, 83B-C), and Socrates' dying remark that "we owe a cock to Asclepius" (118A7-8), the god of healing, which may suggest that life and therefore the body is like a disease of the soul, presumably because it keeps the soul from its natural goal of the truth, as Plato's physical illness kept him from the presence of Socrates (59B10). But apart from these occasional remarks there is a more fundamental reason for the unworthiness of corporeal devotion.

It can be seen, for example, in terms of the doctrine of true and false pleasures and pains which Socrates develops in the *Republic* (583B ff) and *Philebus* (39A ff, 51A ff) and which is implicit in the *Phaedo* as well. At the beginning of the dialogue, introducing his narration, Phaedo remarks that he felt a "strange (ἄτοπον) mixture of pleasure and pain" (59A5-6). Exactly how strange this is becomes clear a page later when he relates Socrates' initial philosophical statement, prompted by the removal of Socrates' leg-irons:

> What a strange (ἄτοπον) thing, men, this thing that people call pleasure seems to be. How wondrous is the nature of its relation toward its apparent opposite, pain, that while they do not both want to come to people at the same time,[19] yet if someone pursues one and takes it, he is always kind of forced to take the other also, as though they were joined to one head although they are two. (60B3–C1)

How does Phaedo's "strange" experience of the mixture of pleasure and pain fit in with Socrates' claim that a "strange" thing about pleasure is that it will not mix with pain? If we look at Phaedo's experience we find that his pleasure and pain were mental — sadness at Socrates' fate mingled with pleasure at the anticipation of hearing Socrates discourse on philosophy — whereas the context of Socrates' remark shows that he is referring to corporeal pleasures and pains. The distinction was left implicit, perhaps in order to create the apparent contradiction and thus turn our thoughts to the difference between the mental and corporeal kinds of pleasure and pain, without breaking the continuity of the dialogue with a digression, a kind of indirection which appears regularly in Plato.

Socrates' expression, "this thing that people call pleasure", suggests that, unlike Phaedo, he is referring not to true pleasure but to a false "so called" pleasure,[20] as does his reference to pain as its "apparent" opposite, and his later remark that bodily pleasures "do more harm than good" (114E). Their falsity consists precisely in the "strangeness" Socrates points out: they are not pleasant or unpleasant *in themselves* but only in relation to each other, pleasure as a cessation of pain, pain as a cessation of pleasure. This relativity is the distinguishing mark of false pleasure in the *Republic* (583B-584A) and of the most important class of false pleasure in the *Philebus* (42C–44A). Since the large majority of physical pleasures are of this sort (the *Republic* and *Philebus* list as exceptions pure sense perceptions) it follows that our devotion to physical pleasure is equally a devotion to physical pain, and so the body's

19. In the *Philebus*, however, such pleasures as scratching itches are said to be mixtures of pleasure and pain (46B–D).

20. Cf. HACKFORTH, p. 33 n. 2.

desires come ultimately to nought and are not worthy of being indulged. Accordingly, at the end of the dialogue Socrates speaks of the philosopher as

> a man who, in life, has renounced the other pleasures, those of the body and its ornaments, as being alien to him and regarding them as doing more harm than good, and has pursued the pleasures of learning. (114E1–4)

The way in which bodily pleasures turn out to be inseparable from pain and thus unworthy of indulgence is further elaborated in the present section. Immediately after remarking that only a lover of the body, not a philosopher, would complain of dying, Socrates suggests that only a philosopher will be truly courageous and temperate, while a lover of the body will brave death only from fear of some greater evil and will be temperate toward some pleasures only as a means to obtaining others, so that his courage derives from cowardice and his temperance from profligacy (68C–69A). Attachment to the body is thus inherently unworthy, as the body not only contaminates the true nature of the soul but involves us in pursuits that are essentially self-negating, and does so moreover, as Socrates later points out (82E ff), in such a way as to tranquilize us from noticing that this is happening.

From this we can see why death, as release from the body, may be deemed desirable, and why life, even if governed by good and wise gods, may be regarded as an undesirable subjugation of the soul. Even if the wicked suffer punishments after death, such punishment would not be an absolute evil but a means to a greater good, the ultimate purification of the soul from corporeal domination. But if this serves to show why death is more desirable than life, the other half of the paradox still remains: how can suicide be improper — what is the nature of our "service to the gods" which it would be wrong to deprive them of?

In terms of Socrates' metaphor the question is why we do not have the right to escape from our corporeal prison. Against the background of Socrates' situation in the *Phaedo*, this metaphor calls to mind his refusal to escape from his literal prison. The major reason given in the *Crito's* account of this refusal is that even if it were personally better for him to escape, it would be a disservice to Athens, whose institutions he had been willing to support and benefit from before they worked to his disadvantage, and which any attempt of his to escape would tend to undermine by the implicit rejection of their legitimacy. In other words, the selfish interests of the individual must be weighed against the individual's responsibility to the whole of which he is a part. Can this principle — which is defended also in the *Republic* (419A–420D, 519E), for example — explain the impropriety of suicide?

Certainly it fits in with Socrates' own mythological explanation, for to speak of our obligation to the gods, our masters, is to speak of our obligation to a higher order within which we find our place. But can it be given here a philosophical basis apart from any religious faith? Later on Socrates expresses his conviction that all things in the cosmos are arranged in accordance with the good, with what is best (97B8 ff), as in the *Republic* too all things are said to spring from the good (509B). From this it would follow that human life is essentially good for the whole, arising as it does from the nature of things, even if it is not personally desirable for the individual. Accordingly in

the *Timaeus*, which is an exposition of how all things may be seen to follow from the good, it is said:

> It neither was nor is right for the best one to do anything but what is most beautiful. He therefore reasoned and discovered, from those things which are by nature visible, that, as a whole, nothing that is mindless will ever be more beautiful than that which possesses mind, and moreover that it is impossible for mind to be anything apart from soul. Due to this reasoning, then, when he composed the whole he placed mind in soul, and soul in body, so that the work he accomplished might be most beautiful, by nature, and most good. (30A6–B7)

We might therefore explain Socrates' paradox in the following terms: although it is uniquely always better for the soul to be uncontaminated by the body, and thus depart from life, we ought nevertheless refrain from suicide, for the attendance of soul to body is requisite for the good of the universe and we must uphold this principle. While this may clarify the paradox, it does not entirely dissolve it, for a tension yet remains between our individual inclination and our duty to the whole. It shows us no unification of the duality but only a rejection of one side in favor of the other. Nor does it provide any guidance as to *how* our life should be lived: it does not tell us wherein our service to the gods consists.

Socrates does give a resolution of the tension between the desirability of death and the duty not to take one's life, but his solution seems at first to be undertaken in bad faith. He says that the proper way for a philosopher to spend his life is in the "practising (*ἐπιτηδεύουσιν*) of dying and being dead" (64A6). While this observes the letter of the prohibition against suicide, does it follow the spirit as well, or does it result in a withdrawal from life so complete that, as far as rendering any service to the gods is concerned, we might just as well be dead? We must see exactly what Socrates means by it.

In response to Socrates' claim that the multitude is oblivious (λελˌηθέναι) to this goal of the philosopher, Simmias laughingly insists that the multitude would, on the contrary, agree that philosophers are moribund, and would deny being oblivious (*οὐ λελήθασιν*) that philosophers deserve to die. They would be right, Socrates replies, except about not being oblivious (*μὴ λεληθέναι*), for they are oblivious (λέληθεν)[21] to the way that philosophers are moribund and deserve to die. The paradox of suicide, that soul ought to maintain itself in the corporeal realm despite its natural inclination toward the incorporeal forms, presupposed a tripartite division of the world into the realm of the forms, the corporeal realm, and the intermediating soul. Socrates' attempt now to show how philosophy is the practising of death is carried out in three stages corresponding to these realms in ascending order, the first being based on a consideration of corporeal pleasure, the second on the soul's pursuit of intelligence, and the third on the nature of the forms.

"Does it appear to you proper for a philosopher to take seriously such so-called pleasures as those of food and drink?" (64D2–4), Socrates begins, and adds as further examples sex (D6) and bodily adornments (D9-10). Olympiodorus has pointed out[22]

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21. Perhaps it is significant that *λανθάνω*, so frequently used here, is the term for forgetfulness of the forms, in the doctrine of recollection shortly to be expounded by Socrates.

22. Cf. ARCHER-HIND, p. 61.

that these three mentions of examples illustrate three types of pleasure: both natural and necessary, natural but not necessary, and neither natural nor necessary (presumably nothing unnatural would be necessary). The usual view of this passage as an advocation of asceticism has been a source of perplexity because of the non-ascetic behavior attributed to Socrates in other dialogues, but in fact there is nothing here that goes against Socrates' usual views. First of all he is not arguing against pleasure in general here, but only the false or "so-called" pleasures (τὰς ἡδονὰς καλουμένας) we discussed earlier, and which he shows disdain for in the *Republic* and *Philebus* as well. In the case of the so-called pleasures that are neither natural nor necessary, such as bodily adornment, he advocates only clothing without elegance, since elegance is unnecessary. In the case of food, drink, and sex, however, he urges not abstinence but only that we refrain from taking them seriously (ἐσπουδακέναι); Plato's earlier mention that Xantippe was holding Socrates' baby son (60A) indicates that Socrates was not celibate even though he is about seventy. The pleasures of food, drink, and sex may be enjoyed as long as no importance is attached to them, which entails moderation. While the combination of enjoyment, on the one hand, and indifference (not taking seriously), on the other, may seem incompatible, it is no more problematic than the observation in the *Symposium* (176C) that Socrates will be equally happy either drinking or not. One allows oneself to appreciate the charms a certain experience has to offer, without forgetting their triviality in comparison to important matters. This attitude is prevalent also in many oriental traditions, especially those stemming from bhakti yoga and mahayana buddhism, where one moves within the common ambit not because of infatuation with it but out of a sence of duty to the world at large, just as the philosopher of the *Republic* returns to the cave, and the philosopher of the *Phaedo* remains within the prison of life.

The unworthiness of bodily pleasures was accepted without argument by Simmias as being self-evident, but someone other than he, with his Pythagorean background, might be less easily persuaded. As we have already seen, however, the whole dialogue is to some extent a defence of the claim of the body's unworthiness. The next stage of the argument, the consideration of the soul's quest for intelligence (φρονήσεως), presents arguments of its own. Here it is argued that the body is a hindrance because truth cannot be conveyed by the inaccurate and unclear bodily senses, and can only be attained, if at all, when the soul detaches itself from the body and from bodily sounds and sights, and pleasures and pains, and devotes itself entirely to reasoning (65B-C).

The third stage of the argument is devoted to a consideration of the forms:

> Do we say that justice itself is something rather than nothing?
> We say so indeed, by Zeus!
> And again, no doubt, that beauty and goodness are something? (65D4–7)

He shortly generalizes from these examples: "I am speaking about everything, such as about largeness, health, strength, and, in a word, of the being of everything else, what each one happens to be" (D12-E1). It is significant that each example of this new group refers to the corporeal realm, further mitigating in certain ways the ascetic tone of this passage. For one thing, the reminder of the importance of health and strength reaffirms the importance of moderate attention to the body's requirements,

for it is clear from the *Phaedo* (cf. 66C1-2) and other dialogues that an unhealthy body is an impediment to thought. More important, it calls to mind that the forms are not a separate world but the truth of this world, so that we transcend the material realm not by ignoring it but by comprehending it, by observing and grasping the universal and permanent within particularity and transience.[23] Although the senses present no truth, they present the necessary basis for the mind's ascent to truth, and although we should not take seriously corporeal pleasures, we must pay attention to the corporeal realm as the place where reality is proximally manifest. Because detachment from the body is by means of perceiving the permanent within the transitory, it is a process arising out of sensory experience, not out of an immediate abrupt and total withdrawal from the world. This is not to deny the obvious asceticism of the passage but only to determine its limits and show that the views presented here are perfectly compatible with his position in other dialogues.

The main purpose of his remarks, however, is to show the soul's need to detach itself as far as possible from the body, when engaged in the quest for truth. Thus with regard to the forms Socrates asks:

> Is the highest truth of them contemplated through our bodies, or is this how it stands: whoever of us has trained himself to think most fully and precisely each individual selfhood (*αὐτὸ ἕκαστον*) of the object of his investigation, will come closest to knowing each thing?
>
> Absolutely.
>
> Then he would do this most purely, who, as much as possible, would approach each thing with thought itself, neither bringing along any sight into his thinking nor dragging up any other sensation with his reasoning; but using uncontaminated thought in itself, he would attempt to track down each thing, uncontaminated, in itself. (65E1–66A3)

Thus, from a consideration of the body's pleasures, the soul's learning, and the forms themselves, detachment from the body is indicated for the philosopher. Not only is the body thus irrelevant to the philosophical pursuit, it is actively inimical: partly because it stirs us up with emotions distracting to the philosophical pursuit, conducive instead to conflict and war (66C-D), and partly because, "even if some respite from it should come to us and we turn to some investigation, it falls into our inquiries again at every point, bringing uproar, disturbance, and alarm, so that we are unable, because of it, to behold the truth" (66D3–7). Therefore wisdom will be possible, if at all, only after death, and in the meantime we can only free ourselves as far as possible from bodily influence. This is why no true philosopher will complain of dying and will welcome it instead (66E–68B).

It follows that the philosopher, unafraid of death, will be most truly courageous. Other people, it has already been noted, brave death out of some greater fear and resist one pleasure only in order to indulge another (68C–69A).

> Blessed Simmias, this would not likely be the right exchange for virtue, exchanging pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains and fears for fears, greater for less, like coins. But that alone is likely the right coin against which all these

23. Cf. *Symposium*, 209E f.

(πάντα ταῦτα) must be exchanged, namely intelligence (φρόνησις),[24] and for this and with this are all bought and sold: real courage and temperance and justice and, in short, true virtue — with intelligence — both when pleasures and pains and all other such things are added and when they are subtracted. (69A6–B5)

It is in this conception of virtue that the resolution of the original tension first becomes apparent, as we shall see. But there is controversy as to whether the depiction of virtue in this passage is itself consistent and whether the metaphor is tenable.[25] Geddes and Archer-Hind both argued that the simile between intelligence and money breaks down, but on different grounds: Geddes because intelligence is not lost in the exchange as is spent money, an objection which Bluck too considers unanswerable, though unimportant (p. 155), and which is largely the same as Hackforth's grounds for suspecting inconsistency (p. 193); Archer-Hind because money is valuable only for what it can buy, not intrinsically like intelligence. Burnet tried to remedy the problem by rejecting the passage as an interpolation but his reasons have been largely rejected on the basis of Luce's arguments.[26] Let us proceed by examining the passage as a whole, considering Geddes' objection first.

Socrates begins by asserting that when we resist some pleasure to indulge another, or withstand some pain or fear to avoid another, we are not thereby virtuous: such acts do not amount to virtue (such as temperance and courage), are not "the right exchange for virtue". The right coin against which virtues must be exchanged,[27] the means by which we are virtuous, is not hedonistic utilitarianism ("exchanging more for less, like coins") but intelligence. What is the meaning of this exchange of intelligence for virtue? In the preceding conversation with Simmias it was clear that the philosopher who had attained intelligence, and only he, was truly brave and temperate, thus implying that intelligence is equivalent to virtue. So we find here the familiar Socratic equation of virtue with knowledge and the suggestion that the various virtues, mutually implying one another, are transformations of one another. In that case the exchange of intelligence for virtues must resemble the exchange of coins in the sense of exchanging one denomination for another, the total value remaining the same, as in the *Meno* (79A3–10) virtue is "changed into small coin" (κερματίζειν) as justice and temperance. Exchange in this sense of changing denominations within the same total value seems the one required by the second sentence. The man who has attained intelligence will, in times of danger, "cash in" his intelligence as courage, and in times of temptation as temperance. He remains throughout a man of intelligence, however, but his intelligence is then manifest not in itself (in terms of abstract thinking or a certain capacity) but in the particular form or

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24. φρόνησις seems to take the place of σοφία here, as one of the four cardinal virtues.

25. Burnet also objects to translating πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀλλαγή as "exchange for virtue" but I think J. V. Luce ("Buying and Selling", *Classical Quarterly*, 38 (1944) 60–64), p. 60, and Hackforth, p. 192, have sufficiently answered his objections. Cf. Reynen, p. 47 ff.

26. Cf. Luce, pp. 60-1, Bluck, p. 154, Hackforth, p. 55 n. 1, Verdenius, p. 205.

27. Bluck takes πάντα ταῦτα to refer not to the virtues but to pleasures, pains, and fears (pp. 54-5 n., 155-6), but the metaphor does not seem to make sense in that case, and the conclusion — "both when pleasures and pains and all other such things are added and when they are subtracted" — seems to suggest that these transactions *abstract from* the presence of pleasures and pains.

application of courage or temperance. The other virtues may thus be regarded as practical applications of intelligence, and the man of intelligence, by thus "cashing in" his intelligence for other *forms* of virtue as needed, and afterward returning to the general form of intelligence, may easily be compared to one who buys and sells one denomination for another (with the difference that monetary denominations are quantitative and thus larger or smaller than one another, whereas this would not hold true of the qualitative differences of virtues). The buying and selling metaphor is applied to the *behavior* of the intelligent man, which changes (e.g. from temperate to courageous) to meet the circumstances, but has its basis in the underlying unchanging *identity* of intelligence and virtue. This double aspect, whereby the things "bought and sold" for intelligence are in principle equivalent to it, so that none of them are ever really diminished by the transactions, is mirrored in the double phrase "for this and with this (*τούτου... καὶ μετὰ τούτου*) are all bought and sold". The force of *μετὰ τούτου* is "*together* with this",[28] so that virtues are bought and sold not only (in exchange) *for* intelligence but also (together) *with* it: since they are at bottom equivalent, intelligence and the virtues are acquired and lost together, as well as being interchangeable. Looked at in this way the metaphor, though doing double duty, is quite sound. Archer-Hind's objection too is circumvented since, if the transactions are for other denominations rather than merchandise, the value of the money (like that of intelligence) is independent of these transactions.

It seems then that devoting one's life to the "practising of death" is not merely an attempt to approximate suicide without technically committing this offence. It is in fact a resolution of the tension between our selfish fulfillment in death and our duty to life, for it not only accords with that fulfillment but is also equivalent to virtue or excellence, i.e. to the highest manifestation of life. The detachment of soul from body in the practising of death, being not a physical separation but a detachment from undue bodily influence, can be achieved only by self control, that is, by bringing the body under the governance of soul rather than allowing it to enslave the soul (cf. 69B7, 82E). This bringing of the body under the governance of reason is the meaning of intelligence and thus of virtue, and also turns out to be meaning we gave earlier to Socrates' assertion of our "service to the gods".

If our service to the gods — or the cosmos, in accordance with whose teleological nature we humans have come into existence — means bringing matter under the governance of reason, this will be accomplished not merely by refraining from suicide but only by living a virtuous life, a life devoted to "purification" (69B8–C3) and thereby to bringing corporeity into the service of reason rather than the reverse. It would be a mistake to conceive this governance of matter by reason in terms of some specific goal or project which man is destined to undertake, such as the control of nature by technology or the rational government of life and resources by a world-wide bureaucracy. It should rather be said that an apprehension of the good would show us that the universe would be less perfect without such beings as ourselves. The role required of us to justify our place in the scheme of things is to be what we most

28. Cf. ARCHER-HIND, p. 69 and the literal translations of E. M. COPE and Henry CARY. This is also the primary meaning given by Liddell and Scott, who refer to *Phaedo* 81A9 where it can have only this meaning. Cf. 104A2.

distinctively are as human beings: not dominion over nature, which would presuppose that reason was not already inherent in nature, and would entail our taking corporeal matters too seriously, but on the contrary a conversion of our concern from the corporeal to the intelligible.[29] It is, as the Neoplatonists elaborated, the reflection of the intelligible back into itself through nature: the natural world arises out of the efficacy of the intelligible and, in its highest nature, man, beholds its own origin. We must therefore maintain a balance, between the temptation of animal-like devotion to the corporeal and the consummation (suicide) of our aspiration to the intelligible, so as to fill our distinctively human role. Together with the impropriety of suicide we must remember the worthlessness of living the unexamined life. Only a life devoted to intelligence and excellence (virtue) realizes the distinctively human possibilities for being, and while thus our most distinctive possibility for life, it also brings us closest to the liberation desired in death. It resolves the antagonism between form and corporeity by placing them in an ordered relationship: form is the essential truth of corporeity.

29. While this is naturally somewhat qualified in the context of politics, where the necessity of governing arises, even here (e.g. the *Republic*) governing is seen not as a *primary* goal of self fulfillment but as a necessary means to secure a society with the maximum opportunity for *personal* self fulfillment.